



New York State Archives

**New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Housing
Building Trades Council Investigation Files L0183**

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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	This series contains grand jury, court, and testimony transcripts and financial records from the investigation and prosecution of Robert P. Brindell and members of the Building Trades Council (BTC) of Greater New York City. Included are checkbooks, ledgers, trial transcripts, and court testimony both from persons adversely affected by the price-fixing and restraint of trade and from Samuel Gompers who details the Council's relationship with the American Federation of Labor.
Creator:	New York (State). Legislature. Joint Legislative Committee on Housing
Title:	Joint Legislative Committee on Housing Building Trades Council investigation files
Quantity:	8 cubic feet
Quantity:	18 35mm microfilm roll(s)
Inclusive Date:	1919-1922
Series:	L0183

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Arrangement

Alphabetical by name of business or last name of defendant.

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Administrative History

Many of the problems caused by the construction trades industry were epitomized by groups like the Building Trades Council (BTC). The committee exposed Council President Robert P. Brindell's practice of using threats, selling "strike insurance," and manipulating the labor supply to extort money from builders and contractors.

Initially Brindell, operating under a charter of the American Federation of Labor, gained control of the wrecking trade. Since demolition of old buildings often preceded a new construction project, Brindell would require that contractors use only union labor on their new project--specifically BTC union labor--or he would withhold the services of the demolition crews, thereby stalling the project. With this small toehold, Brindell built a construction trade empire.

Once he had a lock on choice work assignments, he coerced other parts of the construction industry to join the Building Trades Council. He then set prices as he pleased and accepted bribes to "prevent" strikes, with the contractors passing on these additional expenses to the cost of construction, thereby driving up the cost of housing. "Brindell exercised absolute despotism" over the the construction industry, the committee reported, and eventually Brindell and his chief adjutants were indicted and convicted.

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Scope and Content Note

This series contains grand jury, court, and testimony transcripts and financial records concerning the investigation and prosecution of Robert P. Brindell and other members of the Building Trades Council (BTC) of Greater New York City. The committee, known as the "Lockwood Committee" for chairman Charles C. Lockwood, collected these materials as part of its investigation into conspiracies and trusts within the housing industry.

This series includes the BTC's subpoenaed financial records (including checkbooks and ledgers) revealing that Brindell, the BTC's president, arbitrarily set prices and distributed contracts among those working in conjunction with his oligopolistic scheme. Trial transcripts include those of Brindell and other officers of the Council who were tried for price-fixing and restraint of trade. Testimony from victims of Brindell's practices is also found.

Testimony by Samuel Gompers detailing the Council's relationship with the American Federation of Labor is included in this series. Gompers also testifies about the philosophy behind the AFL and explains some practices of the organization such as apprenticeships and limited memberships. He attacks the judicial system's attitude toward labor and chastises the courts and legal profession. In defending organized labor's right to exist, Gompers also reveals some committee members' anti-labor attitude.

Grand jury hearing transcripts found in this series are restricted.

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Other Finding Aids

Available at Repository

Folder list is available at the repository.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

Grand jury hearing transcripts: Restricted pursuant to Criminal Procedure Law, Sect.190.25.4(a).

Alternate Formats AvailableAlternate Formats Available

Microfilm is available for use at the New York State Archives or through interlibrary loan.

Administrative Information

Custodial History

This series was originally accessioned as part of boxes 1, 16-22, 40, 43, 73-76 of accession -216, old collection #405.

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Access Terms

- Housing--New York (State)
- Labor unions--New York (State)
- Housing--Law and legislation--New York (State)
- Restraint of trade--New York (State)
- Building trades--New York (State)
- New York (State)

- Labor unions--Building trades--New York (State)
- Racketeering--New York (State)
- Price fixing--New York (State)
- Labor unions--Construction workers--New York (State)
- Housing policy--New York (State)
- Labor unions--Construction workers--Law and legislation--New York (State)
- Investigating housing
- Brindell, Robert P.
- Gompers, Samuel, 1850-1924.
- Hogan, William A.